

Coping with social distancing & self-isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic

One of the most difficult challenges we face during this pandemic is the need to abide by social distancing & periods of self-isolation. This can pose a significant threat to our mental health, especially as social interaction & connection with others is central to the maintenance of good mental health. Most of us thrive on being around others & will likely struggle in the absence of regular social contact. To ease this burden, consider the following:



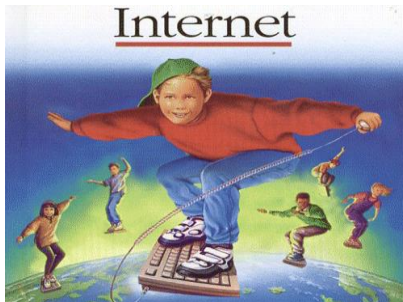
Maintain perspective: This will not be forever. Remind yourself this period of social isolation won't last indefinitely. If you are in a 14-day period of self-isolation you know when that will end. While we don't know how long we will need to abide by social distancing, take comfort in knowing it will eventually end. While we may not have personally encountered a crisis like this, it's important to remember that the world has faced & survived infectious diseases before e.g. tuberculosis, SARS, Ebola, HIV.



Remember the rationale for social distancing & social isolation: In order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, social distancing measures are necessary. Without them, we face an increase in the number of people getting infected & the potential for further fatalities. This could be you or someone you love. It could relate to your neighbour, your co-worker, a fellow student at school or university or someone at your church, gym, social club or local coffee shop. While it might be an inconvenience & even a threat to your job & ability to earn a living, it is a necessary component in the fight against this pandemic.



Maintain a daily routine: A structure to your day can be a life saver. It gives you occupation of your time. In essence it gives you something to do. Without activity we are more likely to fuse with negative & worrying thoughts that serve to increase anxiety & stress & lower our mood. Don't underestimate what you can (still) do at home e.g. read a book; clean your cupboards; donate clothes you no longer wear to charity; watch a good TV series or movie; sort through paperwork you have neglected; get creative with cooking; garden; exercise at home; keep a journal; start an arts & craft project. Try & remember that life goes on. Fill your day with activities that are meaningful.



Stay connected: It's 2020....we have the technology to stay connected no matter what the circumstances. Face time your family & friends. Talk on the phone. Text. Use social media platforms. Send emails. It may not be the same as being close to others (or even in their presence), but it's not a bad way to reach out to others & connect.



[This Photo by Helene von Ardenne is](#)

Limit your consumption of COVID-19 related news: It is very tempting when you are stuck at home self-isolating to get lost in the 24-hour news coverage on TV & online. Even if you are not self-isolating, many of us can develop an almost morbid fascination with up to date coverage. Try & develop some discipline & limit how much time & how often you seek out COVID-19 news. This will help you to remember that life still continues.

If you feel you need professional support talk to your GP &/or make an appointment to see one of our Clinical Psychologists. Call (08) 9468 7512 or email using the [contact form](#).